

# miniMAG

*issue15*  
*Red*

# 太子

去年的太子  
未出世經已夭折  
他是人民的兒子  
這樣說未免過紅

但的而且確  
黑夜給了他黑色的眼睛  
找呀找呀找呀找呀  
光明在哪裡

By Tim Yiu



# Gurkhas in Kosovo 1

a strict division of labour  
necessitated by  
evidence-based best practice:  
you lead the horses to water  
and i make them drink.

brothers in each other's arms—  
of course i would die for you.

peace keeping  
to itself these days.  
peace doesn't  
answer the phone.

now someone arrives from the village  
in a jeep. the shortwave  
squawks a euphemism: she is a  
*representative of the local  
civilian community*  
you always know one by the  
shape under their jacket  
and the look on their face

she keeps asking  
*why are you here?*  
*are you here for us?*  
*are you here for us?*

when the lieutenant says  
*we are here because of you,*

the nuance is lost  
in translation

By Hark Herald





# Cat in the Boardroom

By Alex Prestia

Mother cuts off the flamboyant crimson of the National Day Gala and says bedtime. Mother rushes Apple to bed, muttering a thousand things about tomorrow's busy schedule of classes, and homework, and how there is no time for holiday if Apple is to get ahead. Apple knows she must get ahead. Mother is so preoccupied that she does not notice the black cat sitting on the window sill, peering in through the glass; Apple, of course, notices MiaoMiao, she always notices MiaoMiao. Mother babbles on about which bus is fastest between the English training center, and the violin teacher's rickety apartment, and a million other things that Apple must not respond to. All the while, Apple peers over at MiaoMiao and thinks of the wonderful parade of bajillions of soldiers and the tightly synchronized dancing of the gala. The traditional dresses. The red dragon dance. The joyous singers of timeless homilies to the nation. She thinks particularly of the beautiful young girl, singing of the harmonious future, as she twirled into the arms of a perfectly buttoned-up army officer. Apple practically swoons once Mother turns off the light and leaves the room. MiaoMiao meows. Getting up from bed, Apple dashes over to the window, wrenches it open, and follows the cat into the night.

Palatial conference room complete with thick red columns. A

single double door at the far end of the room, fitted with obedient lion-dog heads biting into door knocker rings. On the opposite side of the room, a dark stone wall with a swirling, snarling dragon. A severe rosewood table surrounded by intricately carved, straight-backed chairs. Unbearably uncomfortable, but the bats and lines carved meticulously into the backs are supposed to make up for that. Chairs enough for a score of men, but only four are seated around the table.

Apple cowers next to the table leg. She is small, so small next to it. These four giants do not notice her; they are busy listening to the foremost giant, who is giving a lecture from in front of the dark stone dragon wall. The giants not noticing her should be a relief; Apple is not relieved in the slightest. The black cat meows. Apple can not see her, but she has certainly heard the meow, the giants pause but do not look around, the foremost giant continues.

He is an aged giant, he must have been muscular- athletic, even- at some point, imposing beyond his size with sharp shoulders. Now those shoulders are hunched, and his shirt, tucked into pants sitting much too far past his hips, accentuate a gut that a fool would call adorable; while others would know not to make a comment. A giant that has become more portly than stout in old age, giving a lecture, pointing at something on the table. Pottery? Just a shard of old colored brick, ancient pottery. He is emphatic; he's speaking of history. 5000 years, maybe 6000, maybe timeless; he is beaming. To Apple the little pottery shard looks very similar to a pile of brick shavings that were left behind by some laborers in her apartment complex's garden last spring. The dragon, the aged giant they are on the north side of the table. Apple knows this but does not know how. The giant is to the north, and the pottery shard is the focus of the rest of the table's attention. This is the Northern Head, the foremost giant. He is entrenched in his spot.





On the east side of the table a smaller giant hides behind his glasses, his back perfectly straight against his chair. His finger quivers, he wants to input, he wants permission, he wants to raise it and interrupt. Meek. Stammering, stammering about. Stammering about the people, or the banks, he tries to say that the banks must- but he doesn't finish. House of cards, he sputters out, but the Northern Head continues on, the only change is that now, as he points at the pottery shard, he is looking eye to eye with the meek Eastern Chair. The pottery shard is a shard; it was broken. The Northern Head does not like that it was broken. The small Eastern Chair remains seated. Silenced before he could speak.

Boasting about his shard, the Northern Head motions across the table from the Eastern Chair to the Western Constituent. The Western Constituent is bound by rope to the intricate back of his seat. The rope weaves in and out of different scenes of agriculture, animals, and ancient legends carved lovingly into the wood. He's gagged with a red flag, skinny from lack of food, silent, and unmoving. So weak that if he did move, if he could muster something, they shan't be able to see the gesture, but he is not dead. Apple does not know why she knows this; Apple knows he is not dead. The shard seems to hold some symbolism to the Northern Head, symbolism about justice and power. Justice that explains why the Western Constituent must be treated so. The shard is why he must not speak, he must listen; he must not gesture, he must learn; he must not change, he must adapt. The Eastern Chair is gazing down at the table. He makes no outward sign that he sees the Western Constituent. He makes no acknowledgement positive or negative. He repeats something about a bank in a humble hush.

Apple climbs onto the table. The edges are inlaid with etchings. Detailed trees, leading to a menagerie of gorgeously inlaid tigers, then dragons, phoenixes, damsels playing lyre . Intricate patterns fill in any open space. She spots MiaoMiao,

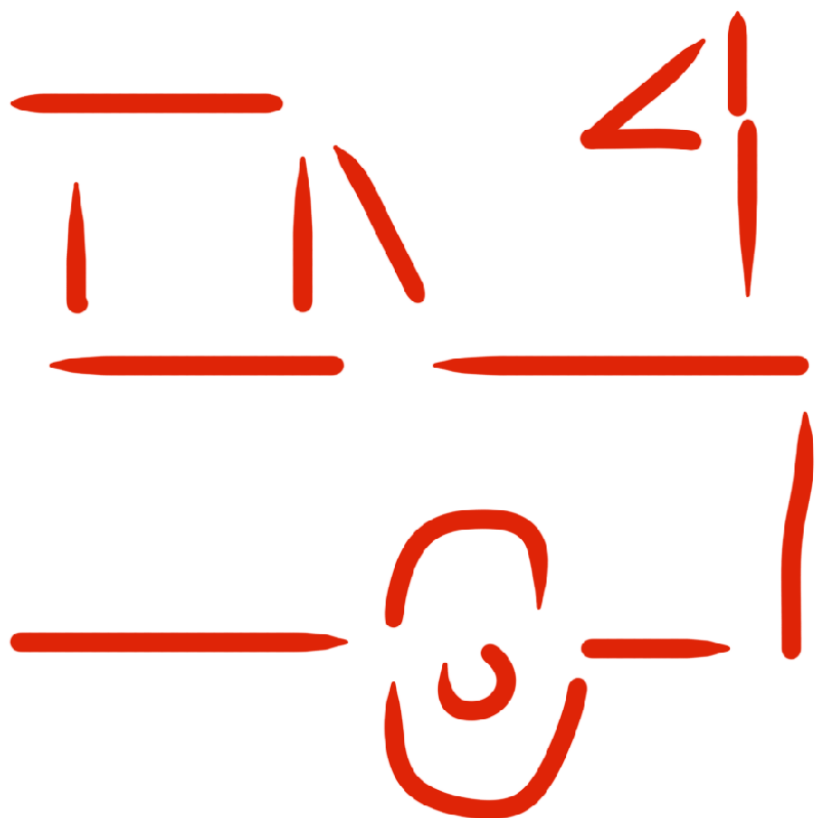


etched in with the other animals and moving. Moving among the happily sowing peasants, around the gorgeous horses and north, up the table towards the Northern Head, but as MiaoMiao goes forward the etchings are becoming less vivid, the skill of each tiger is dropping, what was life-like becomes unimaginative, then cartoonish, then childish, and finally crude. MiaoMiao reaches the Northeast corner of the table, meows loudly, and darts off of the table back into her three-dimensional form.

While Apple was watching MiaoMiao, the Eastern Chair too, had been slowly moving his eyes up the table. Once again his gaze meets the Northern Head, he whelps. The Northern Head grins, picks up the shard, and begins yelling wildly. He's pointing now to the southernmost edge of the table where a corpulent man slouches: the Southern Chief. He must have been sleeping, otherwise Apple would have noticed him. Immediately upon awakening, the Southern Chief begins feasting upon a range of dishes spread out around his end of the table. Plate after plate of food disappears into his mooncake hole of a mouth. His stubby fingers push delicacies against the grotesque ring of grease growing ever wider around his lips. His head is tilted back, lips to the sky, allowing the food to slide down his puffy cheeks. The grease extends up to his nose, down to his chin. Rolls of fat flop onto the table, only to be rivaled in number to the rolls of the buns he is using to pick up sauce from spent plates after he has dropped the contents onto and into his mouth. More, more, more, he is hungry. He used to be thin, screams the Northern Head, thin as a rail- now see how he spreads! The Northern Head is delighted at all of this. The Eastern Chair's head is in his hands, surely he sees that the usefulness of the "spreading" has long past, the returns garnered from expenditure on each dish have fallen. Mutters to himself: Rice given to a starving beggar satiates; candy given to a fat child spoils. Where there was vigor is now corpulence, but the Eastern Chair dares not contradict the north.

Apple is standing in the middle of the table now, dwarfed on all sides by these massive figures. Helpless, but wanting to confront the north. It is the north she wants to scream at. She feels red. She wants the dancers, the beautiful dancers of the Gala, but she screams with no voice. She screams with no wind. So far from the edges, she is stuck in the middle. The Northern Head makes no outward mention of her. The Northern Head need not hear her; he simply tosses the shard, carelessly, onto the middle of the table. The shard lands onto the exact spot where Apple stands.

“Apple, dearie, time for math class. Wake up, Wake up! Granny made you some noodles, eat quickly and don’t forget your English books.” There’s a meow from somewhere outside in the community garden. Apple is glad to be awake.



# Gurkhas in Kosovo 2

die for your brother —  
but not all at once.

i'd take a bullet for you —  
but it would be better  
to die gradually on your behalf,  
a little each day, maximizing  
our resources & operational efficiency

this too is among our  
evidence-based best practices.

it's cold tonight, so  
borrow my scarf  
& wait patiently for the chance  
to hurt someone badly

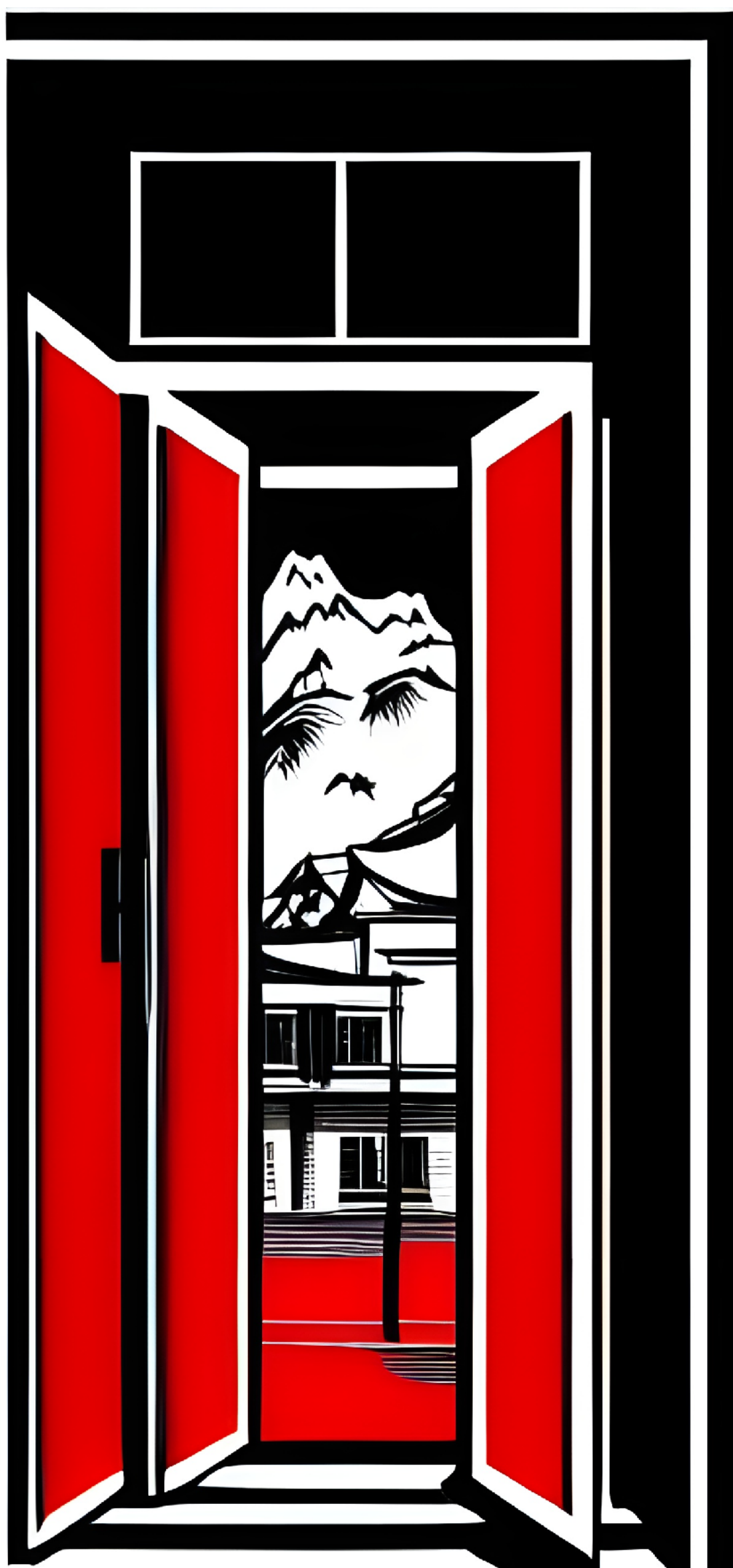
each of us nurtures  
an interior civilization,  
bright worlds where  
things arise independently  
and exist unbidden forever.

crushing and smothering these  
places, hiding the evidence  
from our colleagues, is what  
allows us to love each other  
living in a country like this.

but, lieutenant,  
when you smile at me like that,  
i can see your incandescent empire  
glittering from behind your teeth

so please do what you must  
to get rid of it

By Hark Herald



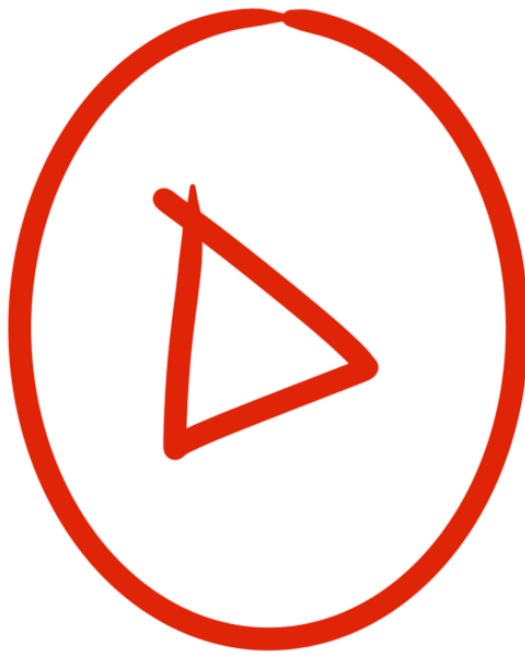




## Child's Play

By Daniel Andrée

Kids don't play pretend as teachers and police officers anymore, but instead have turned in their rulers and fake badges for masks and q-tips to play pretend "testing center". If you come up positive, one of the tough kids takes you away to an "isolation center" where you stand facing a musty corner of the house counting down from 30, every ten seconds equals one month. After your time is up, you get tested again. Luckily, you have overcome the benign virus, but now you must do home quarantine. Your "health code", sketched on a piece of paper, is at the mercy of the health officer who wields a green, yellow, red, and in the rare case an orange marker to fill in your code. Sometimes an asterisk is added for extra measure. You, the once infected kid, now play the part of a mad-man barely hanging on to your own sanity. The infection has not killed you, but your spirit has died through the process. You get numb and have become institutionalized to the daily checking of the codes. You fear one wrong move will land you back in the center again. The "cool kids" in the neighborhood want to change the rules of the game and hold a meeting to discuss the matter. The committee conveniently has found "new cases" to lockdown the whole neighborhood and sideline the kids they don't like from the meeting... Kids these days... Sure have quite the imagination, don't they?



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